OCTOBER 1959

The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

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REFORMATION DAY, 1959

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Leonard Verduin

SIOUXLAND AND SUBURBIA
John Timmerman

INFALLIBLE IN WHAT IT INTENDS TO TEACH
Andrew J. Bandstra

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Comments on Current Events . . .

Who Fooled Whom?

SOVIET RUSSIA launched two missiles in mid-September, 1959. One landed on the moon; the other alighted at Andrews Airforce Base near Washington, D. C. Which of these two potential weapons was the more indicative of the real Soviet threat to the democratic way of life remains to be seen. Perhaps they were but two sides of the same coin: One, the remarkable conquest of space, being but the material *insigne* of the Other, namely, the dynamic physical and intellectual power typified in the shrewd, brilliant, calculating diplomat, who rang all the changes — from throwing canny temper tantrums to embracing pianist Van Cliburn, and who landed as deftly on his feet each time as did the Russian capsule on the moon.

The American people, by the millions, saw and heard Nikita Khrushchev. Television displayed for a fortnight some of its tremendous potential for returning politics first-hand to the people; and for a brief interlude Americans could take diplomatic relations "straight," without the slick syrup of commentator and newsprint — almost "straight," that is, because selectivity by some telenews editors was imposed by the limits of funds and network time.

There was irony in the fact that the head of a Communist state became an advertisement for a capitalist rubber company. If he knew of it, the Dictator took it in his stride. Taking things in stride is, no doubt, prerequisite to scaling the principle upon which he stands. Khrushchev came prepared by long practice to impose upon all, and to be imposed upon by none. If he never missed an opportunity to fool us, he also took occasion to puncture our efforts to fool him. And in this he achieved some eminent successes. The question is, Did he at the same time fool himself after all?

Let me elaborate on this question by starting a little way back.

KHRUSHCHEV won his way, finally, into American hearts, even though he never took possession of them. Maybe he coasted in upon our bad conscience for some of the deliberate slights he received at first. Perhaps Americans cannot stay professionally "mad" at a guest for very long. Or maybe it was because Khrushchev acted in some ways an American ideal: he seemed to say and to do, or want to do, pretty much what he pleased, with equal disregard of protocol, dress suits, and opinions he disliked. But among other reasons, I think his habit of deflating speeches made to impress him or the television audience won our grudging interest, if not approval. While putting on a good show himself, he not only kept others from prying about backstage by his calculated outbursts of bad temper, but he persistently skewered the "ham" in those who sought to share the footlights with him, or at his expense.

It was a delight to observe how he gazed right on through the Mayor of Los Angeles, and leaped upon the platform the hapless Mayor had erected, to throw a fit of temper which frightened more able critics away thereafter. When Governor Lawrence of Pennsylvania told the Russian visitor that American politics stop at the water's edge, Mr. K. responded with a little lesson in semantics which robbed the adage of all its time-worn luster; and then he seized the opportunity to stress Soviet solidarity. And when, back in California, the President of Twentieth-Century Fox boasted of his rise from humble parentage, the Dictator not only went him one better at both ends of the line but he tossed in a barbed homily on Russian economic exploration under the Czars.

This popping of verbal balloons was fun to watch, not the less so because Khrushchev obviously enjoyed the game. Words are, for him, political weapons, to a degree achieved by no modern American politician except, perhaps, the late Senator McCarthy. Khrushchev knows how to gird sounds for battle, and senses inerrantly under what kind of emotional umbrella to send them over the top. All the while, he himself remains quite above the syllables he is casting into the contest. He has no intention of fooling himself with the same noises he makes to fool others. The first rule of his game is to keep the heart at home.

In this he differs radically from us.

WHETHER or not one fools others best when he also fools himself is an open question. Probably Khrushchev does not think so; and Americans do not, by and large, even reflect upon the problem. But I venture the assertion that we are quite content to fool ourselves by what we say, in the sense that we have no compunctions about making, and *meaning*, assertions quite out of keeping with our practice — and if the Russian supposed that we didn't *mean* what we said in the persons of Mayor Poulson, or Governor Lawrence, or Mr. Skoura, he egregiously fooled himself.

It may *seem* obvious to Mr. K., for example, that a nation which dropped two atomic bombs on women and children as a matter of survival in a hot war *can hardly be morrally serious* in the words it uses in condemning the use of Russian tanks in Hungary on a mission which no doubt Khrushchev viewed as one of survival in a

cold war. But we do mean what we say about Hungary, and the words we used are not just weapons in a battle of phrases. Again, remembering full well what happened to the American Indian, and what is happening to the American Negro, Khrushchev may suppose that Americans *can hardly mean* all they say about oppression and slavery behind the iron curtain. He might assume we use these words only as he uses his, not so much to convey meanings as to strike a desired response. But we *do think, mean,* and *intend* what we say against Russian tyranny, however our history and conduct conflict with our words.

This is the way we are. If Khrushchev exhibits some capacity for skillful appearance of consistency, we show large capacity for ingenuous indulgence of contradiction.

Think, for example, of how a large corporation will expand lavishly of the profits it makes from "administered prices" to advertise the worth of the free-enterprise system. Or consider that at the annual N. A. M. convention the echoes of vehement denunciation of government encroachment on economic life have scarcely died away in the Waldorf-Astoria ballroom when the platform comes to ring with proposals for stringent regulation of labor — by government. While down at Atlantic City the voices of labor reverse the emphases with equal disrespect for the laws of contradiction.

This, I say, is the kind of people we seem to be. What we do sometimes bears no necessary responsibility to what we say. And while this is all commonplace enough, the sting of it in relation to Mr. Khrushchev lies in that we mean with all our hearts much of what we say, nonetheless. To illustrate again: the gas-station attendant who fills your tank with fuel priced at exactly the same figure per gallon at all of the big-name stations in your city tosses in on the side a word or two on the virtues of competition — and don't we agree with him? He just never relates the words he uses to the gas he pumps — but do we relate them to the gas we pay for? So, too, the professional man who studiously obeys the mores and blue laws of his national association means nonetheless honestly his derisive critique of unions. And, just once more, do we not all honestly confess ourselves unworthy sinners, but fly into hurt resentment when anyone so much as winks at a chink in our moral armor?

WHETHER, as I have said, we fool others when we also fool ourselves is a disputable question. I leave it open. But a danger arises when this technique meets a master at the other variety. Mr. Khrushchev knew all along what he was doing. He missed no opportunity to use words as powerful weapons, whether it was to thrust at windbags or to lecture on the morals of the can-can. The question is: does he understand that we are not playing that kind of game? Our deeds may or may not comport with our words, but we still mean the words enough to fight for them. We have given our hearts to our spoken convictions, however our hands may belie them. If Mr. Khrushchev did not grasp this, with all his fooling he also fooled himself.

Of the two missiles the Russians sent out in mid-September, one returned home. The data he brought back will mean much for peace or war in our generation. But if he failed to sense that Americans *mean* the things they say, then his understanding of us is as far from reality as we are from that other missile on the moon. L.D.K.

Reformation Day, 1959

JOHN CALVIN ON THE REFORMATION

We maintain, then, that at the commencement when God raised up Luther and others, who held forth a torch to light us into the way of salvation, and who, by their ministry, founded and reared our churches, those heads of doctrine in which the truth of our religion, those in which the pure and legitimate worship of God, and those in which the salvation of men are comprehended, were in great measure obsolete. We maintain that the use of the sacraments was in many ways vitiated and polluted. And we maintain that the government of the Church was converted into a species of foul and insufferable tyranny.

Necessity of Reforming the Church, Tracts, I, 125

Briefly to conclude this part of our subject: We are in search of the Church of God. We all admit it to have been so propagated from the beginning, as to have continued through an uninterrupted series of ages down to our day, and to be diffused at present over the whole world. Another question remains, viz., Is it tied down to persons? Although we see how perilous it is to admit this, still we are unwilling to be so very solicitous in taking precautions for the future. But when the name of the Church is usurped by those who, as far as in them lay, have utterly destroyed it, how dastardly were it not to reclaim at least against the present evil? . . . . The knowledge of the Church must therefore be sought elsewhere than from the titles of men; and in vain do we go around searching for it while the truest method spontaneously presents itself. Who of us, to recognize a man, would look at his shoes or his feet? Why then, in surveying the Church, do we not begin at its head, seeing that Christ himself invites us to do so? He says, "Where the carcase is, these will the eagles be gathered together." Wherefore, if we would unite in holding a unity of the church, let it be by a common consent only to the truth of Christ.

True Method of Reforming the Church, Tracts III, 266

Besides, I deem it of good example to testify to the world, that we who aim at the restitution of the Church, are everywhere faithfully exerting ourselves, in order that, at least, the use of the Catechism which was abolished some centuries ago under the Papacy, may now resume its lost rights . . . . What we bring forward, therefore, is nothing else than the use of things which from ancient times were observed by Christians, and the true worshippers of God, and which never were laid aside until the Church was wholly corrupted.

Dedication of Catechism, Tracts, II, 36-7

But the most serious charge of all is, that we have attempted to dismember the Spouse of Christ. Were that true, both you and the whole world might well regard us as desperate. But I will not admit the charge, unless you can make out that the Spouse of Christ is dismembered by those who desire to present her as a chaste virgin to Christ, — who are animated by a degree of holy zeal to preserve her spotless for Christ, — who, seeing her polluted by base seducers, recall her to conjugal fidelity, — who unhesitatingly wage war against all adulterers whom they detect laying snares for her chastity. And what but this have we done? Had not your faction of a Church attempted, nay, violated her chastity, by strange doctrines? Had she not been violently prostituted by your numberless superstitions? Had she not been defiled by that vilest species of adultery, the worship of images? And because, forsooth, we did not suffer you so to insult the sacred chamber of Christ, we are said to have lacerated his Spouse! But I tell you that that laceration, of which you falsely accuse us, is witnessed not obscurely among yourselves; — a laceration not only of the Church, but of Christ himself, who is there beheld miserably mangled. How can the Church adhere to her Spouse, while she has him not in safety? For where is the safety of Christ, while the glory of his justice, and holiness, and wisdom, is transferred elsewhere?

But it seems, before we kindled strife, all was tranquillity and perfect peace! True! among pastors, and also among the common people, stupor and sloth had caused that there were almost no controversies respecting religion. But in the schools, how lustily did sophists brawl? You cannot, therefore, take credit for a tranquil kingdom, when there was tranquillity for no other reason than because Christ was silent. I admit, that, on the revival of the gospel, great disputes arose, where all was quietness before. But that is unjustly imputed to our Reformers, who, during the whole course of their proceedings, desired nothing more than that religion being revived, the Churches, which discord had scattered and dispersed, might be gathered together into true unity. And, not to go back upon old transactions, what sacrifices did they, on a late occasion, decline to make, merely that they might procure peace to the Churches? . . . Our Reformers offered to render an account of their doctrine. If overcome in argument, they decline not to submit. To whom, then, is it owing that the Church enjoys not perfect peace, and the light of Truth?

Reply to Sadolet, Tract, I, 67-8

We are as ready to confess as they are that those who abandon the Church, the common mother of the faithful, the "pillar and ground of the truth," revolt from Christ also; but we mean a Church which, from incorruptible seed, begets children for immortality, and, when begotten, nourishes them with spiritual food, (that seed and food being the Word of God,) and which, by its ministry, preserves entire the truth which God deposited in its bosom. . . . In like manner, the unity of the Church, such as Paul describes it, we protest we hold sacred, and we denounce anathema against all who in any way violate it. The principle from which Paul derives unity is, that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," who hath called us into one hope. Therefore, we are one body and one spirit, as is here enjoined, if we adhere to God only, i.e., be bound to each other by the tie of faith.

Necessity of Reforming the Church, Tract, I, 214-15

Christian Truth Is an Ellipse

by Leonard Verduin

IT IS a well-known fact that Dr. Abraham Kuyper very early in his journalistic career published a book entitled *Dat de Genade Partikulier Is,* a volume which contends effectively that the redemptive grace of God is selective.

It is also well known that before Kuyper came to the end of his career he was moved to write *De Gemeene Gratie,* a work which defends the thesis that besides this selective grace there is a common, a non-selective kindliness of God, with benefactions for all, a *common grace.*

The fact that Kuyper felt the need of complementing his maiden volume with the later work is extremely interesting — especially when it is apparent that the later work was in no sense a repudiation of the earlier. This procedure shows that Kuyper was at heart a Christian theologian rather than a rationalistic philosopher.

For one of the basic differences between a Christian theologian and a rationalistic philosopher is that the former does not choose a single thesis about which to arrange his system. A Christian theologian is one who has discovered that truth dwells precisely at the point where thesis and complementary thesis touch each other. For example, a deist is a rationalistic philosopher, for his whole system is built around the concept of the transcendence of God; similarly, a pantheist is a rationalistic philosopher, seeing that his whole system is controlled by the idea of God's immanence; but a theist is a Christian theologian, because his system turns about the idea of divine transcendence complemented by the idea of divine immanence, or, vice versa. To the extent that a man is a Christian theologian in the proper sense of that word his system of thought derives from the Bible; and it is, I suppose, because the Bible deals with the Creator-creature complex, with the time and eternity combination, that it leads to a system in which thesis and complementary thesis stand in tension with each other.

The human hand is a proper parable of Christian truth. Just as the human hand consists of fingers opposed by a thumb, so Christian truth consists of thesis and counter-thesis. A thumb alone is an embarrassment, and a bunch of fingers by themselves likewise; the one derives its usefulness from the juxtaposition of the other.

Kuyper realized that to speak of special grace and to let it go at that is to commit mayhem upon the body of Christian truth. Therefore he developed the counter-doctrine of the common grace of God. For, to speak of the one without the other is to speak as a rationalistic philosopher rather than as a Christian theologian. And to speak as a rationalistic philosopher is to speak as a heretic.

To state the matter graphically, Christian truth is never like a circle, drawn around a single point; it is always like an ellipse, a figure drawn around two points. Christian truth is not round; it is oval. It is elliptical. If one wishes to know the truth concerning Jesus of Nazareth he must take up his position at the point where Jesus' deity and His humanity intersect, where God and man touch each other. A philosophy concerning the Christ which doted on His deity and doubted His humanity was one of the first heresies to raise its head, a heresy that was laid low by a fine piece of theology known as the Nicean Creed, a creedal statement that insists that the truth concerning the Christ is not like a circle drawn around a single center but like an ellipse drawn about two points. And the truth in Christology lies in the paradox of "remaining God He became man."

WE encounter the same situation in the truth concerning *Holy Scripture.* It is of the essence of orthodoxy to know that to conceive of the Bible correctly one has to stand at the point where the Primary and the secondary authors touch. This is of the essence of the authentic Christian view of divine self-disclosure, which sets itself off from the ethnic conception of revelation precisely in the fact that the ethnic version dotes on immediacy. They of Ephesus, to give but a single example, worked themselves into a lather about an image of Jupiter that had allegedly fallen out of heaven, quite without human mediacy. In the Christian idiom as to revelation we slide without the slightest consternation from "Thus saith Jehovah" to "Thus saith Moses." No one can read very far into the Scriptures without being struck by the constant oscillation between the two. This means that to grasp what divine self-disclosure means one has to take his station at the point where God and man have *met.*

In the authentic Christian tradition we do not say with full enthusiasm that the Bible is God's Book and then add half grudgingly that men had something to do with the writing thereof.

A few years ago the Bible was referred to, in the circles served by this *Journal,* as "that mine of

religious insight" and at least one ecclesiastical body and several individuals sounded alarm. But even if the expression "mine of religious insight" had been used as an equivalent of "deposit of religious insight" (which was not the case; for the context made it abundantly plain that by "mine of religious insight" was meant that deposit of religious truth into which men must sink their shafts in order to gain religious insight) there was nothing to get at all excited about. To drive a wedge between revelation and insight is to attack at its very heart that complexity which alone can give us the authentic concept of revelation; it is to propose that we give up theology for philosophy. Isaiah and Paul and all the rest did indeed have religious insights — which they wrote down — under divine supervision. To say less than this, or to say it grudgingly, is to move away from the idiom of theology to the idiom of philosophy. It so happens that the Christian idea of revelation is complex. It is an ellipse rather than a circle.

THE elliptical character of Christian truth comes to the fore also in the *doctrine of creation.* If we think theistically, then we will realize that because God is transcendent His creative act will have its irruptive dimension; that is to say, it will present itself to us as an imposition, a breaking-into. But because God is also immanent this self-same act of God will have its processive dimension; that is to say, it will look to us like a working from within. It belongs to theism, and therefore to theology, to make room, with equal willingness, for the irruptive and the processional dimensions. To dote on the irruptive is to distort authentic Christianity as much as it is to dote on the process.

Nothing is more apparent than that the Bible gives a processive dimension to God's activity as Creator. The very six-day sequence is enough to make this plain, as is the oft-repeated formula "Let the earth bring forth . . . ." It was because the Christian Church had lived for a long time in the tents of the philosopher rather than in those of the theologian that it was alarmed when men proposed to carry into the concept of creation the idea of process; and the excesses of the evolutionistic camp were an understandable reaction. The philosophy known as evolutionism was thrown, with lethal intent, at a rival philosophy that had long enjoyed a snug couch in the place where theology should have kept house. At any rate, the time has now come for us to speak once more, as we treat of origins, in the idiom of theology. The time is past when eyebrows go up when it is said that God's creative act had its processional dimension. And the time has come for us to say, with equal emphasis, that it likewise had its irruptional dimension. To dote on either is to sell out to error.

THE authentic *doctrine of salvation* is likewise not a circle; it also is an ellipse. Salvation has to do with *state,* and with *condition;* it has its forensic and its moral dimensions; Christ does things *for* us and He does things *in* us. In the language of the fine old hymn (composed by a theologian, of that you may be sure), Christ must "be of sin the double cure"; He must "save from wrath and make us pure." And any theology that speaks with partiality toward the one is on the way of becoming just another philosophy.

Luther was dangerously near to serious error when he collided with James. His partiality toward the forensic dimension of salvation, his one-sided emphasis upon what Christ does *for* us, was an evil, an evil from which Lutheranism has not even now wholly recovered. And Modernism's impatience with the forensic aspect of salvation is again an understandable reaction.

The writers of the Heidelberg Catechism were theologians — as becomes apparent in their discussion of the thing in hand just now. They also revelled in the forensic dimension of salvation; but they realized full well that this is not a matter of either-or. Their doctrine of justification-by-faith-and-not-by-works never parts company with the companion doctrine that "it is impossible that those who are implanted in Christ should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness" (Q. 64). With these theologians redemption by His blood never occurs without renewal by His Spirit (Q. 86). Because they were theologians they refused to choose between Gospel and Law — for the quite sufficient reason that the authentic representation of salvation is a *complex* thing. Modernism's harangue on salvation-by-character would not have gained so many ears if those ears had not been asked to listen to a "theology" (the quotation marks are deliberate) of salvation-with-but-little-reference-to-character.

THE *doctrine of the Covenant* is, in its authentic version, likewise an ellipse. Near to the heart of this doctrine lies the idea of separation-from. Covenant people are a people apart. They are a band of come-outers, of men and women, young people and children too, who have drawn apart. And Christian baptism is a rite setting forth and celebrating this otherness, this spiritual *apartheid.*

But all this becomes heresy unless it is complemented, complemented by the idea of integration with the world. Covenant people are called "saints" in the Bible; but the word "saint" derives its meaning from the fact that over against the saint

is that toward which and in view of which his sainthood exercises itself. In a situation where everything is saint there nothing is saint; for a saint is by definition a something with reference toward the rest. Because of this, Abraham is no sooner delineated as the father of the covenant people but there is added, in one and the same breath, lest we become mere philosophers, "and in thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed." It was the bosom sin of Israel that it exchanged a complex idea of the covenant for a simple one; that is, sold the theology of separation-in-tension-with-integration down the river; by this simplification its doctrine of the covenant became a heinous heresy.

Covenant people are sometimes referred to as "Christians." Now the word "Christian" is from a Greek verb meaning *to anoint*. And an anointed one is always a separated one, one differentiated from the rest. But his anointing loses its sense if and when the environment of that anointing is removed; his anointing must have its that-in-view-of-which-it-occurs. One is anointed with reference to that which lies around him. One cannot practice anointedness in a vacuum; he must have the non-anointed to give his own anointedness sense and meaning. It is extremely significant, and written for our instruction, that the early believers were not called *Christians* as long as they, in the tradition of earlier times, practiced simple separation. The name became necessary at Antioch, when the separated ones began to practice non-separatedness, when the people-apart addressed themselves to the world from which they had come away.

All "Covenant theology" (again the quotation marks are intentional) that begins and ends in the idea of separation must be known for what it is — incipient heresy. All differentiation from the world and its masses that does not end in involvement therein is good wine that has turned to vinegar. The doctrine of the covenant might require of us to travel on the common carriers rather than to charter a special Greyhound in order that we "may be with our own people." And covenant schools (also called Christian schools) that teach our children only the idea of separation but do not prepare them for a life of integration are the result of a philosophy, not of the Christian theology.

IN our *doctrine of God* we must likewise be theologians, not philosophers; for the doctrine of God is elliptical, like all the rest. God is indeed sovereign and there are times when we must bear down on men with this doctrine. But a "theology" (note the quotation marks) that is like a circle drawn around that doctrine is philosophy, not theology. The doctrine of divine sovereignty has companion truth, without which it deteriorates. Any discussion concerning divine sovereignty that makes a farce of history is philosophy, not theology. Any would-be theology that sacrifices human option or relegates it to the periphery of thought is in error, the more dangerous because it talks so enthusiastically of divine sovereignty. Nor can the satan of a "theology" in the signature of human option be cast out by that sort of thing. For the truth lies at the point where the idea of divine sovereignty stands in tension with its companion idea.

When the writer of these lines was a child he, like most of us, was fed a diet that was heavy in the matter of divine sovereignty. He remembers that in catechism class after a delineation of divine sovereignty, in which the very entrance of sin into the world seemed to fit without any embarrassment, just before the minister folded his hands for the concluding prayer he would say: *"Maar kinderen, God handelt niet met den mensch als met een stok of een blok"* (But children, God does not deal with men as with sticks and stones). And the writer of these lines recalls that through his childish mind (during the prayer we confess) there flitted the thought that if the concluding remark were seriously meant it is incumbent upon ministers to keep it in mind *during* their discussion of divine sovereignty. He has since discovered that unless the doctrine of divine sovereignty stands in tension with the companion doctrine of human responsibility we have not as yet assumed the stance that becomes the man who would engage in theological discussion.

At the Synod of Dort there were theologians gathered. They met in a day when it seemed that the doctrine of divine sovereignty was being challenged. And it is to their lasting credit that as they spoke of divine sovereignty they kept throwing out such complementary bits of truth as: "but all who are called are called in good faith," and "but God is in no wise the author of sin," or "the cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins is in no wise in God, but in man himself," etc. We do not mind saying that without these interspersed complementary truths the Canons of Dort would be quite repugnant to the present writer.

This is because the writer wishes to be a Christian theologian, rather than a rationalistic philosopher. He has learned to see that the theology of John Calvin is by no means a philosophy spinning dizzily around the concept of divine sovereignty — much though that doctrine was upon the good man's lips. And the writer would be happy to be a mere theologue, following the great theologian of Geneva, who never allowed himself to forget that Christian truth is an ellipse.

Siouxland and Suburbia

by John Timmerman

FIVE of Calvin College's alumni have received national literary distinction. Their books have been published by reputable firms, reviewed in quality magazines, and in the case of each author at least one of his novels has been well up in the best-seller lists. Writing reviews about the books of two of these author's raises nobody's eyebrows. Writing about the books of the other three in our publications is a challenge to literary nuclear warfare. The reviewer thrusts himself into a no man's land awaiting simultaneous hostile fire from the puritan and the avantgardist. If he escapes wounds, it is because he is unread — a pleasant dilemma.

Anyone who knew Peter De Vries or Frederick (Feikema) Manfred at Calvin College sensed that when they would be graduated their literary future would not be past, but the most perceptive critic could hardly have predicted their rather amazing products of 1959. *Conquering Horse* by Manfred goes back to primitive Indian society for its inspiration, to a pagan world dense with myth and symbolism, a world of fetish, trance and medicine man, a world without a white man. *The Tents of Wickedness* by DeVries is as contemporary as the last *New Yorker*, a striking pastiche of Marquand, Faulkner, Proust, Hemingway and others, as well as authentic DeVries. It is an acrid portrait of an indecent society living in Decency, Connecticut, a cerebral dance of wit, pun, and parody proceeding from the lips and pens of some of the zaniest characters in fiction. Drama merges into melodrama and melodrama clanks into farce. Here is suburbia, slick, sophisticated, and suppurating.

The two books, though strikingly different, reveal important similarities. Both are imaginative creations. *Conquering Horse* is an imaginative form of historical fiction. Terrain, characterization, and plot, though doubtless authentic, are illuminated by poetic feeling and poetic insight. This recreation of an alien culture is no pedestrian, factual, historical novel. *The Tents of Wickedness* is surely a social fantasy, if not a social nightmare; if there is really such a social structure, Alice lives in Wonderland and you can write her a letter. Both are remarkable in their nomenclature. Manfred's book abounds in the picturesque symbolism of such names as Circling Hawk, Owl Above, Moon Dreamer, and Redbird. DeVries specializes in such fantastic handles as Chick Swallow, Beth Appleyard, Pete Cheshire, Colonel Bickerstaffe, a "Waccy" woman, and the Groteguts. Neither shows appreciable indebtedness to the Christian tradition, though there is a certain magnanimity and moral grandeur in some of the characters in *Conquering Horse* that seems rooted in the Christian sense of the dignity of man. Dignity is lost in Decency, except in the case of Mrs. Swallow, who in this book of psychiatric case histories resembles the normal taxpayer.

THE most striking difference between the two books lies in the contrasting cultures portrayed and in the contrasting visions underlying and informing their depiction. *Conquering Horse* is a simple and moving story of a young man in search of a significant name. No Name, as he is called at the beginning of the story, must attain a meaningful name through a god-given vision and a series of brave deeds. The book is the search for the name and the ensuing heroism once the vision is given. Running parallel to the search for tribal status through the acquisition of a proper name is a tender love story, pagan and frank at times, but never salacious. The action, and the life of the Sioux, are governed by religious feeling, vision, and prophetic interpretation by Moon-Dreamer, the tribal priest. The gods speak to man in visions, dreams, and natural phenomena. The word of the gods is real to the people and in the highest vision, the life of the spirit is eternal, for as Redbird says before his miraculous translation to the spiritual world, "My son, it does not matter where the body lies, for it is grass. But where the spirit is, there it will be a good place to be." The world of *Conquering Horse* is religiously orientated, though the religion strikes the reader as a maze of gross superstition.

The Tents of Wickedness is the story of Charles Swallow, columnist for the *Picayune Blade*, popularly known as "The Lamplighter" for his advice to the lovelorn and maladjusted. Swallow is a writer and amateur psychiatrist, drawing his inspiration from literary and psychological sources, both of which prove chimerical rush lights to him in his search for answers. He ruins more people than he helps. Beth Appleyard, a giddy whirl of ideas and feelings trying to be born, is a gifted but psychologically dislocated poet, walking the thin edge of normalcy from childhood. "Sweetie" Appleyard is Swallow's main project in moral rearmament.

Following his regimen for maturation, she swirls through Greenwich Village with abandon and ends her pilgrimage to the good life with Swallow as the putative father of an unborn child. Swallow also tries to rehabilitate his brother-in-law, Nickie, and ends by splitting Nickie's personality. The minor characters, like the major ones, are witty, cerebral, and bohemian. Further documentation is needless. They move in a world of moral fog, luridly illuminated by glittering wisecracks. Swallow finally comes to feel himself a sort of fool, and says that "the conformity we often glibly equate with mediocrity isn't something free spirits transcend as much as something they are not quite up to." Yet there is no remorse in the book, only relief at escaping consequences. Convention is pragmatically safer than revolt, but the conviction has no religious orientation. To that *The Tents of Wickedness* have their flaps shut.

THERE are other notable differences. Manfred's novel is a good example of artistic impersonality. There is no ubiquitous authorial *I* in the story. The Yankton Sioux are authentic Indians, living in a pre-white world from which the contemporary has been amazingly refined. The novel is a surrender to objective subject matter in characterization, description, scene, and point of view. It is a remarkable advance for Manfred because his earlier novels suffered from personalistic intrusions. DeVries, however, is ever with us. His gaudy aquarium of queer fish speaks with the fantastic rhetoric of DeVries himself. Swallow, Crystal, Nickie, Mme. Piquepuss, even the minor characters, revel in the well-turned phrase. Swallow, of course, is sometimes little more than a series of phrases. The fantastic story, the switches in narrative technique, the purple ensembles of styles — all are DeVries keeping his puppets hopping. Manfred's characters enjoy an objective life in an heroic, almost epical, dimension; DeVries's characters are almost literary clothes-horses to model his verbal dexterity. Finally, the styles, though notably effective, are sharply different. DeVries, when not engaged in parody, or conscious imitation of some contemporary stylist, writes with metallic brilliance, a taut, polished prose which reaches its peak of deft excellence in the superbly realized party scene at Flickendens', where the bower of Decency blows with tropical rot. Manfred's prose has thrown off many of the excessive onomatopoetic neologisms of his earlier work and is a carefully wrought concrete medium, simple yet rich in its minute accuracy of detail, its sensitivity to natural beauty, its frequent rhythmical grace. In the best passages, as in the visions of No Name and his pursuit of the great white stallion, who has some of the dimensions of Moby Dick, it reaches an evocative magic of distinction. The battle scene between Black One and Dancing Sun, the two great stallions, throbs with onomatopoetic power. The staccato beat of the prose perfectly echoes the masculine savagery of the battle.

THE Tents of Wickedness, which has received wide publicity, is now a best seller and a Book of the Month. The Seaboard papers and journals have praised it vigorously, using phrases like "best comic novelist" and "irresistible." The sheer literary tour de force is undeniable; the dazzling variety of successful stylistic imitations from Marquand to Joyce, the play of wit, and the dexterous if fantastic handling of situation are delightfully clever. The puns are sometimes good: in talking to a dealer in evergreens, Swallow says, "I phoned your office but deciduous out." They are, sometimes, "corny": "His present concern was to favor his feet, which he had more than once described as on their last legs." The figures of speech are often strikingly original: "an island of coagulated stockings known as a hook rug." The epigrams are pungent: "the English ate as they talked, the Americans merely talked as they ate." The literary comments are shrewd: "the miles of relentlessly combed Jamesian syntactical fleece." The light verse parodies are brilliant. But there is a plethora of wit; this battering assault of bon-mots wears one down. There is too much verbal polish and not enough enriching vision. The plot is absurdly, if hilariously, contrived; the characters are generally unconvincing. The satire lacks the moral indignation of Swift, the outraged sense of decency in Twain. Lamplighter Swallow, trifler Nickie, giddy Sweetie Appleyard arouse no deep human concern. They are literary conceits on a moral holiday. Passages are frankly prurient. Judged by Christian perspectives, Decency is a world of hollow men, which, to use DeVries's own pun, does not end with a wimple. Russel Lynes says that DeVries is a moralist but never a prig: the moral never rises higher than pragmatism, and even to think of DeVries as a prig requires a massive imaginative exertion.

Conquering Horse has had scanty and ungenerous recognition. Yet, it is in many ways an enriching novel. The authentic Sioux culture, the high seriousness, the heroic dimensions of some of the characters, the simple and compelling story are all solid values. There is frankness in the treatment of Leaf and No Name but not pruriency. The book is at bottom a spiritual odyssey. Manfred's treatment of Sioux mythology is amazingly objec-

tive. There is never a note to suggest that what can only be read as incredible legend is anything but history. Since the material is so utterly legendary, it seems to me the point of a reminiscing narrator might have been more convincing than that of an omniscient historian. Then the events, fabulous as they are, would have seemed misty and distant, and would have put less strain upon a "willing suspension of disbelief." However that may be, one can recommend the book enthusiastically to the adult and discriminating reader.

"IN our unpleasant century, we are all mostly displaced persons," says Basil Willey, and twentieth-century literature has been much concerned about finding some kind of home again. Obviously, Manfred and DeVries are displaced persons as far as their common spiritual and cultural heritage is concerned. Rootless, disenchanted writers have groped for a meaningful center. Some have found it in dogmatic Catholicism, some like Hemingway have tried to root a stoical code in nothingness as a center, some like the Beatniks seek security in shameless histrionics, some like Steinbeck in a vague pantheistic mysticism. DeVries and Manfred in their literary products show no devotion to the Christian faith. Manfred seems to be seeking roots in a primitive past, in a sort of mystical appreciation of the continuity and consanguinity of man and nature. DeVries sees "the worm in the Marquandian apple" all right, but he tries to accommodate "the worm," the dissonance in existence by persiflage, and satire. Man is to be corrected by pragmatic common sense.

Novelists create their own world, that is their moral right and their moral responsibility. One does not dictate a writer's vision, but the reader has the right to judge it according to his basic convictions. A Christian writer cannot be a divided critic, compartmentalizing the aesthetic, moral, and religious judgments. Pure aestheticism is impossible because literature always deals with life experienced by a human being who is inextricably involved in moral action. Hence the Christian reader completes the purely aesthetic and moral judgments with religious insight. Judged by these convictions both books lack the Christian dimension, and whatever one's regard for author or book, one is troubled and regretful that two of the most prominent Calvin graduates write books untouched by the Christian vision.

Infallible in What It Intends to Teach

by Andrew J. Bandstra

WHEN a person becomes a Christian, he recognizes Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. His acceptance of Jesus Christ is inextricably bound up with the testimony of the Bible concerning his Savior, for it is in the Scriptures alone that Jesus Christ is clearly manifest. The new Christian recognizes that all of God's promises revealed in the Word are fulfilled in Christ. The same Spirit that moves him to acknowledge Christ also moves him to accept, as true and reliable, the testimony of Scripture concerning God's redeeming work in Christ. It can hardly be otherwise.

Yet it cannot be said that the Christian at this point necessarily has a fully developed doctrine of the inspiration or infallibility of the Bible. He does, however, have a new authority in his life, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he will want to know what his Lord has set as his rule and standard and in what manner this rule should be regarded. This leads the Christian to consider Christ's teaching concerning the Bible as his rule for faith and practice. For this teaching he must go to the Bible itself, in which he first learned of Jesus Christ. Thus, belief in Christ comes first, and only then does the Christian come to a consideration of a theory or doctrine of Scripture.

UPON examining the Bible, the first thing the Christian will notice is the high regard that Jesus Himself had for the Old Testament Scriptures. In both Matthew 5:17, 18 and John 10:31-36, Jesus maintains the inviolable authority of the Scriptures. They are the final authority for Him and He so uses them in His conflict with Satan.

His apostles, too, have an equally high regard for the Old Testament writings. They quote them as their authority. They assert that prophecy comes not from man, but from God through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21). Further, no matter which translation of II Timothy 3:16 is cited, this text either asserts or assumes the divine inspiration of Scripture.

N. H. Ridderbos[1] suggests that while Christ and His apostles did not develop a specific theory of inspiration, yet the doctrine of verbal inspiration is certainly a consistent projection of their teaching. He holds that the statement, "The Scriptures are the human, fallible [*gebrekkige*] source of divine infallible revelation," finds no support in the teachings of Christ and His apostles concerning the Old Testament.[2]

By that same process of projection or extension, it may be inferred that the word "infallible" is a proper one to describe the attitude of Christ and His apostles toward the Old Testament. They looked upon Old Testament Scripture as the final court of appeal, the ultimate truth by which matters were to be settled.

The witness of the New Testament concerning itself, while slightly different from the nature of the case, presents similar evidence. Jesus is recognized as one speaking with authority (Matt. 7:29). The apostles regard the Lord's sayings as final authority (I Cor. 7:10), and their own advice, by God's mercy, as also being trustworthy (I Cor. 7:25). Paul's letters are held in high esteem, even as the Old Testament Scripture (II Peter 3:15, 16). In addition, the authority of the apostles as the ambassadors of Christ is everywhere insisted upon.[3]

All in all, it is hardly overstating the case to say that our Lord Jesus Christ intends the Bible to be our "infallible rule for faith and practice." Through His Spirit, the Scripture becomes our norm, our standard, our authority. It is the imperishable, the living, the abiding Word of God, which has been preached to us in the gospel (I Peter 1:23-25).

NOW the Christian has his Bible. It is his infallible rule. Yet if he is going to use the Bible *intelligently,* he must be aware of certain distinctions concerning the *nature of the authority* of the Scriptures that have been made in the community of the Christian Church. While these distinctions and qualifications have been made — and almost every Christian, either consciously or unconsciously, uses some of them — they have not always been observed in defining the concepts of verbal inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible. It is the contention of this article that the several points mentioned below *should be used* in defining the concept of Biblical infallibility. What do we mean when we confess the Bible to be "our infallible rule"? Negatively, what do we *not* mean by that confession? What does the Bible itself tell us concerning the nature of its own authority? These are the questions we must ask and to which we must seek answers. We must allow the givens, the phenomena, of Scripture to speak on the subject. To be clear at this point will help the Church in her witness to the truth of the Word of God.

Perhaps a phrase which covers the distinctions that will be made is the one included in the title of this article: *the Bible is infallible in what it intends to teach.* The several distinctions mentioned below are meant to serve as a justification for that statement. Each, in its own way, throws light on the nature of the authority of the Bible. While the various points interrelate and sometimes overlap, they may, for the sake of clarity, be distinguished.

(1) THERE is, first, the problem of the so-called "anthropomorphic expressions" concerning God, that is, the ascription to God of human characteristics and properties. Face, hands, eyes, back, etc. are ascribed to God in the Bible. Every Christian, almost instinctively, feels that these statements should be interpreted non-literally, for God is a Spirit. Fact is, much of the language of the Bible is figurative or symbolic.[4] One must, in order to be true to the message of the Bible, endeavor to get at the sense or meaning of a statement or expression.

What has this to do with the question of infallibility? Much. It is, indeed, just at this point that the teaching of Biblical infallibility has been misunderstood. It has been asserted, for example, that if the Bible is to be taken as verbally inerrant then it must be held that God has a back and that He has hands large enough to cover the cleft of a rock in which a prophet hides. It has further been alleged that not to take such statements literally is to abandon the principle of inerrancy formulated as a doctrine.[5]

Now, of course, enlightened defenders of infallibility of the Bible do not hold that every statement in the Bible must be taken literally. Yet they have been so interpreted.[6] Such misunder-

1. Much of this article is based upon the contribution of N. H. Ridderbos, "Schriftbeschouwing en Schriftgezag," in *Vox Theologica,* (24th ed., No. 4, March, 1954), pp. 93-105. Further references will be made to it without designation of title. I have taken the liberty to rearrange and add to it.

2. *Ibid.,* p. 94. Ridderbos acknowledges certain problems that remain. For example: the O. T. textual source quoted in the N.T.; possible quotations from apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings; the question of Jewish hermeneutics evidenced in the writings of the N. T. These, he feels, do not alter the basic position.

3. Herman Ridderbos has especially developed the significance of the apostolate, oral tradition, and the history of redemption for the authority of the N.T. Cf. his book *Heilsgeschiedenis en Heilige Schrift* (Kampen, 1955), and, in shorter compass, the chapter, "History of Redemption and the Scriptures of the New Testament," in *When the Time Had Fully Come* (Grand Rapids, 1957), pp. 78-96.

4. This is true, more or less, of all language, since every word is a "symbol" that is meant to convey a meaning.

5. Cf. Shailer Mathews, *The Faith of Modernism* (New York, 1925), p. 43.

6. James Orr, in *Inspiration and Revelation* (New York, 1910), pp. 209ff., refers to many such misinterpretations.

standings could be avoided, however, if we, as defenders of Biblical infallibility, would make plain that we confess that the Bible is infallible in what it intends to teach. Such a confession seems to express what the Christian believes concerning such anthropomorphic expressions.[7]

(2) TO this first rather common phenomenon must be added a second which is almost equally familiar: between the periods of the Old and New Testament, there was the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, His life, His suffering, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. By means of this great event in the history of redemption, the ceremonial law of the Old Testament was fulfilled.[8] The writers of the New Testament show the great significance of this event.

That does not mean, however, that the New Testament writers no longer regard the Old Testament as authoritative. It does mean that, holding the Old Testament as authoritative, they seek to develop its meaning in the light of the fact that the Messiah has come in the person of Jesus. The New Testament writers show that the new phase of redemption ushered in by Christ's coming brings many changes in the lives of those who serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who is now fully revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Any Christian who embraces the Old Testament along with the New as the infallible rule for faith and practice must certainly keep this in mind. Although the Israelite was recommended to do so, the Christian does not bring a ram or a lamb for an offering. This command is not, in this sense, a rule for the Christian. The *intention,* once again, is important. The Spirit in the New Testament shows that such ordinances of the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Christ. In this light the concept of the Bible as our "infallible rule" must be defined.

(3) ANOTHER point, closely related to the second, is the fact that revelation runs through a history. Certain truths concerning God and His program of redemption are revealed more clearly as this history of redemption unfolds. There is a "progressive revelation."[9] It has been correctly pointed out that inspiration usually does not transcend the existing stage of revelation."[10] Thus certain truths, less clearly revealed in the earlier parts of the Old Testament, are more clearly revealed in the later parts of the Old Testament and most clearly in the New.

That there is some such "progression" in revelation can be seen in the episode recorded in Luke 9:51-56. James and John, with an evident reference to Elijah, wanted to call down fire from heaven upon a Samaritan village which would not receive Jesus. These disciples desired to follow Elijah's example. Jesus, however, rather than approving their plan, rebuked them. Jesus did not say that Elijah was wrong. Nonetheless, he does imply that both He and the disciples, at this stage of the revelation of God, were to follow "new" and "improved" methods.

Ridderbos[11] points out three items of revelation which indicate such progression: the fact of a life after death is more clearly seen in the writings of Paul than in Psalm 6; the person and work of the Messiah are more clearly revealed as the Old Testament history unfolds; and, thirdly, the truth that salvation is for all peoples of the earth is more clearly seen in the New Testament than in the Old, and, in fact, more clearly revealed in the New Testament after the death and resurrection of Christ (cf. Matt. 15:24). The New Testament does not contradict the Old, but it exhibits a higher stage of revelation.

Hence, if the Christian is intelligently to use his Bible as his infallible rule, he must recognize the purpose of the Spirit in giving him a norm that has developed in history. As he reads his Bible he must often ask such questions as: What state in the history of revelation does this portion represent? Is the truth revealed in this section of Scripture more clearly revealed in or superseded by a later stage of revelation?

(4) THE fourth item is the old but important distinction between the "historical" and "normative" authority of the Bible.[12] That the Bible has "historical" authority means that it is a true and reliable record and ought to be accepted as such.[13] As "normative" authority, it is the rule or norm for our life and ought to be followed or observed.

Obviously not everything contained in the Bible was meant to be normative for us. For example, it is true that Job's wife said to him, "Curse God,

7. Works on hermeneutics refer to the importance of this phase of Biblical interpretation. Cf., e.g., L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation,* (Grand Rapids, 1950), pp. 82-87.
8. N. H. Ridderbos, *op. cit.,* pp. 99, 100.
9. *Ibid.,* pp. 98, 99.
10. James Orr, *op. cit.,* pp. 175, 176.
11. *Op. cit.,* pp. 98, 99. He also points out that scholars today speak less glibly of being able to trace the development of ideas in the Old Testament, largely perhaps because the idea of evolution has less impact in this field today than it had a half-century ago.
12. Ridderbos, *op. cit.,* pp. 96-98. Cf. also L. Berkhof, *Introductory Volume to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1932), pp. 164, 165.
13. This is not to say that we should fail to distinguish between that which is meant to be historical and the non-historical material, that is, parables and the like. We should also observe that some historical Biblical material is not presented in actual chronological order.

and die," but that does not mean that we should imitate her under similar circumstances. Again, it is true that Judas Iscariot went out and took his own life, but that does not mean that we should "do likewise."

The application of this distinction is rather obvious in the examples given above, and there are other equally patent applications of this distinction. There are, however, many instances in which it is difficult for us to determine whether a given passage is meant to be normative for us.[14] At any rate, these are sufficient to show the importance of the distinction. Only that which is *intended* to be normative for us is our infallible rule for faith and practice.

(5) THE fifth point is closely related to the fourth. Ridderbos (p. 100) puts it this way: "By every command one must take cognizance of the circumstances under which it was given." He points to the occasion when Ezekiel was not permitted to show grief or weep over the death of his wife (Ezek. 24:15ff.). Yet this does not mean that weeping is never permitted at the time of a loved one's death, since in this instance the command not to weep was given for a special purpose.

Another example may be in order. In II Corinthians 13:12, Paul exorts the Corinthian church to "greet one another with a holy kiss." Are we to conclude from this that the "holy kiss" is the only Biblically sanctioned greeting to be used among Christians? If so, we have been grossly negligent in our conduct. But I do not believe that such is the case. In verse 11 we note that Paul wants them to "agree with one another and live in peace." He wants them to express their Christian fellowship and communion. According to the special customs of that day, the kiss was a common way of greeting and, thus, an appropriate way of expressing fellowship. Hence the exhortation took this unique form. Today, while we have a similar need to follow Paul's injunction to express Christian fellowship and unity, the social customs are different. Paul would probably be satisfied with a sincere handshake.

Ridderbos mentions other examples, but enough has been said for our purpose. Frequently, in the light of the special circumstances in a passage, we must ask, "What does the Bible intend to teach us?" Only in this way can we properly use the Bible as our infallible rule for faith and practice.

14. Ridderbos, *op. cit.*, pp. 97, 98, refers to the passage in Jer. 20:14ff. where the prophet of God curses the day of his birth. On the basis of evidence in the book of Jeremiah itself he believes that this should not be regarded as normative. Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 165, states that, "In dubious cases we shall have to be guided to a great extent by the analogy of Scripture and by the moral law."

(6) The nature of the reporting which we find in the Bible must also be considered.[15] The Gospels furnish the best type of evidence here, since they often contain three or four accounts of the same conversation. To get directly to the point, when we say that the Bible is infallible, do we mean that the Gospel accounts give us a courtlike, word-for-word reproduction of what Jesus said? Obviously they do not. We will use only one example in which the differences in accounts come to expression in translation. In answer to the question why His disciples did not fast, Jesus replies in the form of a parable. Matthew 9:17 reports it this way: "Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; if it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." Mark 2:22 has: "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but new wine is for fresh skins." Luke 5:37, 38 is closer to Mark: "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins."

These reports are not word for word the same; yet they give, basically, the same picture. And we may believe that the Spirit kept them from capricious changes so that they give a true account of what was said without being verbatim reports.

Riderbos (p. 96) feels that something similar may have happened with the prophetical writings, the accounts of the prophecies being written down later by a group of the prophet's disciples. Luke, likewise, in the book of Acts may have summarized in his own words some of the speeches of the apostles. Similarly, there may be scribal influences in the New Testament epistles. Scribal influence has been recognized as a factor in explaining certain stylistic and other differences between epistles written by the same author.

From this point of view the idea of verbal inspiration and Biblical infallibility ought to be defined. If it is evident that the Spirit operated in the manner depicted above, then we may not insist upon a word-for-word type of reporting. The Spirit's method and intention must be recognized.

(7) ANOTHER important point is the nature of inspiration itself, namely, that inspiration was "organic" rather than "mechanical." The mechanical view of inspiration suggests that the human author's mind was passive and was but a chan-

15. Cf. Ridderbos, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 96.

nel for the work of the Spirit. On the other hand, Berkhof defines organic inspiration in this way:

> [The Holy Spirit acted upon the human authors] in an organic way, in harmony with the laws of their inner being. He used them just as they were, with their education and culture, their vocabulary, diction, and style. He illumined their minds, prompted them to write, repressed the influence of sin on their literary activity, and guided them in an organic way in the choice of their words, and the expression of their thoughts.[16]

Luke, for instance, did not sit idly by when he came to write his Gospel, but made a careful investigation of the things that he was to write in order to give a trustworthy account of what had happened among them from the beginning (Luke 1:1-4).

The fact of organic inspiration contributes more to our understanding of the Bible than merely accounting for stylistic differences. The Bible writers wrote in accordance with their own "education and culture." Ridderbos (pp. 101-105) notes that not only the writers but also the participants in the revelation often bear the stamp of their own times and cultures. He gives some examples of certain concepts that are often classed as bits of the so-called "primitive" revelation of the Old Testament. One is the activity of Josiah who, upon the occasion of Elisha's death, shot an arrow eastward and with other arrows struck the ground (II Kings 13). So, too, the Bible refers to the Leviathan, a concept shared with other religions of the East. Ridderbos points out that though Israel shared these concepts with the people of that time, the Israelites, uniquely, utilized them to show Jehovah's greatness. In the Bible the arrows are "Jehovah's arrows"; and it is Jehovah, not Baal, who conquers and controls the Leviathan.

Some of these conceptions which the Bible writers shared with the people of their day — and which seem strange and antiquated to us — have been utilized in Scripture. Are we bound to hold them today? It should be noted, in response to this question, that such "primitive" conceptions enter the Biblical writings only *incidentally* in order to express the main idea of God's revelation. Let us look at one instance in the New Testament. In Philippians 2:10 Paul exclaims, "That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth." Did Paul have a "three-level" view of the universe, with the heaven above, a flat earth below, and a world under the earth? It might be argued that he did[17] At any rate, it can readily be seen that Paul's intention here was not to give a pronouncement on the nature and construction of the universe. Rather, he merely uses a particular view incidentally to show that ultimately Jesus Christ shall be universally recognized as Lord by the entire creation. In this instance, as well as in others, we must be careful to distinguish that which is the central intent of the teaching from that which is merely incidental.

(8) THE final point deals with the nature of the revelation in the New Testament and the significance this has for the nature of the authority which the New Testament possesses. Herman Ridderbos has written on this matter in works referred to earlier.[18] We have already touched upon one aspect of it in the sixth point. Here, however, we are concerned with the relationship of the accounts of the New Testament to the redemptive acts of God in history, commonly known as "redemptive history." The discussion here will be limited to the accounts in the Gospels.

It has become rather well known that the Gospels are not biographies of Jesus in the accepted sense of biography. They do not give us a complete picture of the "life of Jesus." Rather, they give "proclamation" (*kerygma*) concerning Christ. The Gospels proclaim the new acts of God in Christ Jesus. When this character of the Gospels came to be observed, there was a tendency among some scholars to separate the history of Jesus from the proclamation of it. The facts of the history of redemption tended to become unimportant; the proclamation, whether or not it was based on actual facts of history, became the central thing. This view, however, perverts the actual character of the gospel proclamation, for the proclamation of the good news is nothing unless it is based upon events which occurred in history, pre-eminently the great acts of God in Jesus Christ (for example, Paul's remarks on Christ's resurrection in I Cor. 15:17-19). In addition, this view — the tendency to separate the proclamation from the history on which it is based — overlooks another aspect of the apostolic function, namely, that of "witness." In the New Testament "witness" refers primarily to that which was visible and audible. The apostles were to be witnesses to the things that had happened among them which they had seen and heard (cf. I John 1:1-4). This witness of the apostles was twofold: to witness to the actual historical events or facts; and, further, to witness to the truth revealed in these facts. Certainly the historical facts of Christ's life, His suffering, death, resurrection,

16. *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

17. F. Mussner, in *Christus das All und die Kirche* (Trier, 1955), pp. 9-39, builds up Paul's conception of the universe as depicted in Ephesians. Mussner uses it to show that Ephesians is not as influenced by "gnostic" thought as some have contended.

18. See reference 3 of this paper.

and ascension were not unimportant to the writers of the Gospels.

Yet it must be noted that the central thing to which the Gospels bear witness is the great acts of God in Jesus Christ. These they proclaim along with the meaning of them; to these they demand the response of faith on our part. Concerning these great truths they give us unquestioned certainty. When we examine the gospel records, however, we note that, while they give us certainty concerning the central events in the history of redemption, they do not afford us such certainty with reference to various historical details connected with the history of redemption. For example, the record of the birth of Christ bears witness to its uniqueness: He was "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary." This witness is given by both Matthew and Luke. Yet if we try to ascertain the *exact date* of Christ's birth, we find insufficient evidence to pinpoint even the year of His birth. (This is not to say that the evidence in Matthew, Luke and John is contradictory.) Or, observe the accounts which we have of the resurrection of Christ. Christ's resurrection stands as one of the giant pillars of truth in the Gospels and the Epistles. Both its fact and its meaning they proclaim in no uncertain terms. Yet, if we, today, attempt to reconstruct the *order of events* which accompanied the resurrection of Christ as reported in the Gospels, we can achieve no absolute certainty on this matter of historical detail. We may point out *possible* construction, but we are not *sure* they are correct. Perhaps all we can say is that the Spirit did not intend to give us absolute certainty as to the chronological order of the events surrounding Christ's resurrection.

Consider but one other example in the Gospels. It is the oft-referred-to account of the healing of the blind men near Jericho as reported in Matthew 20:29ff., Mark 10:46ff., and Luke 8:35ff. Matthew reports the event happening as Jesus left Jericho; he reports two blind men present; and he records the conversation as using plural pronouns. Mark, too, records that it happened upon leaving Jericho, but he refers to only one man, Bartimaeus, and in the conversation singular pronouns are used. Luke bears witness, along with Mark, to only one blind man, and the conversation is reported as using singular pronouns, but he states that the event occurred upon entering Jericho rather than leaving it.

Many attempts have been made to harmonize these accounts. It has been suggested that these are accounts of three different events, but few have been willing to take that position. With reference to the "entering" or "leaving" of Jericho, it has been suggested that "Jericho" is used in two senses: Matthew and Mark refer to the older city, whereas Luke refers to the newer city of Herodian times. That is a possibility. There would still remain the problem of the "one" or "two" blind men. The solution often suggested to this problem is that "if there were two blind beggars present, there surely was one." Mark and Luke refer only to the more prominent one, while, in actual fact, there were two, and to both of them Matthew bears witness. (It should be observed, however, that on the basis of this reasoning, there may have been five beggars present, Matthew reporting only two, and Mark and Luke but one. Further, one still faces the problem of what conversation actually took place, since Matthew reports it with plural pronouns and Mark and Luke with singular.) In any event, it should be obvious that at this point we can achieve no certainty on this matter of historical detail. As the records now stand, perhaps all we can say with certainty is that in the vicinity of Jericho (not Samaria or Galilee) certain blind beggar(s) (as to the exact number we cannot be sure) cried to the Lord in his/their need. He, in His great mercy, had compassion upon the needy, and demonstrated His great power by effecting a cure. To this central truth they all bear witness.

THESE various items have been given to illustrate the fact that the Bible itself must be allowed to speak on the nature of its own authority. It has further been suggested that a phrase which might cover these various phenomena would be the statement that the Bible is infallible in what it intends to teach. This article does not pretend to answer all the questions relating to the subject of Biblical infallibility; it merely intends to suggest an approach to the subject that should not be overlooked.

Just one concluding remark. It might be alleged that to say, "The Bible is infallible in what it intends to teach," makes the normativity of the Bible something "subjective" rather than "objective." In response to this possible allegation, two things should be considered. In the first place, every Bible student is confronted with a measure of "subjectivity," no matter how absolute his idea of Biblical infallibility may be. For example, he must decide which passages have normative authority and which do not. The Bible student (along with the whole Christian Church) must be the judge. This is, in that sense, a subjective judgment. Secondly, there is usually recourse open to the objectivity of the "analogy of Scripture." That, primarily, must be the objective standard of judgment in considering these questions. One must seek the answer in the witness of Scripture concerning itself.

The Mystery of Christ

by Harry R. Boer

THE early church, as we meet it in the pages of the New Testament, was a church that looked to the ends of time and to the ends of space. Its interest was not the interest characteristic of the contemporary scientific concern with the conquest of space. Its interests were for that matter not less cosmic. The early church saw space and time as dimensions of existence in which the lordship of Christ would be asserted. Insofar as it could concretely concern itself with the extremities of creation it did so in missionary vision and activities. It went into the whole world, preached the gospel to all nations, saw the ends of the earth as the limits of its parish, and counted on the presence of its Lord to the end of the age.

This was all, however, but part of a larger vision, the vision of the "mystery of Christ," a mystery that transcended the longest reaches of the mind of man as it saw into the past and future and into the limitless avenues of cosmic space. We want in this and in a subsequent article to try to capture something of the majesty of this conception.

THE church of the New Testament had its unfavorable and even sordid aspects. One need only read Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to see how small and sinful the church could be. But it was not small in its decisive moments. In its decisive moments the church lived by the faith that gave it birth. Separating itself from its Jewish prejudices, it sent the gospel to the gentiles, superseded law with grace, insisted on no formal requirement for entrance into the church, and saw the whole world as its mission field. Nowhere did the early church think bigger than when she thought with Paul about the "mystery" which he unfolded. There is something fantastically interesting and enlarging in this concept; it fascinates and yet we do so little with it. Perhaps the reason for doing so liittle with it is that it is first and foremost a missionary conception and the church is never very greatly interested in missions; it is an eschatological conception but we are not particularly interested in hastening on to the end, not even when we discover that we are standing in the midst of it; it is a universalistic conception and we are by and large parochially inclinded; it is a conception that wants to see the church in its entirety, but we would rather fix our attention on our little section of it. Nevertheless, there it is in reference after reference in Pauls letters, and never does he speak more imposingly than when he sets forth the idea of the mystery. What is it all about?

Let us first of all get the references concerned more clearly before our minds:

(1) Romans 11:25 — . . . I want you to undestand this mystery, brethren; a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved . . . .

(2) Romans 16:25-27 — . . . . the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about obedience to the faith . . . .

(3) Ephesians 1:9, 10 — For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him. things in heaven and things on earth.

(4) Ephesians 3:4-6. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

(5) Ephesians 3:8-10 — To me . . . this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

(6) Ephesians 5:32 — This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church . . . .

(7) Colossians 1:24-27 — . . . In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister . . . to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

(8) Colossians 2:2, 3 — . . . to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(9) Colossians 4:3 — . . . and pray for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison.

IT is necessary to point out that when we speak of mystery in the twentieth century we mean something quite other than the readers of St. Paul understood by the word in the first century. By mystery we generally mean something that for the time being baffles comprehension, something of which we know the *that* but do not yet understand the *how* or the *why*. We believe, however, that if we only knew more of the facts involved the mystery would disappear. Therefore mysteries can be "solved" and then there is no longer any mystery left. Taken more absolutely, mystery also denotes for us the idea of the inherently insoluble. Creation, life, the being of God are mysteries in the sense that we shall never be able to comprehend or explain them. We accept them as incomprehensible realities.

In St. Paul's day, on the other hand, the word mystery would evoke in the first place the idea of the prevalent and popular mystery religions. These were religions that purported to disclose to initiates the secrets of religious power and to introduce them to supernatural realities. Suggestive rather than didactic, the mystery religions depended for their power on the creation of a mood in the initiate, on the belief in mystic union between the devotee and the deity, and on the careful exclusion of all non-initiates from the ritual. In the Greek mystery concept the idea of intellectual incomprehensibility was by no means lacking — the religious power felt by the devotee was apprehended rather than comprehended — but it did not stand in the forefront. Something was revealed and conferred which did not by being revealed and conferred lose its mystic, wonder-inspiring character. The mystery of the divine power could be revealed and still remain a mystery.

This complex of ideas Paul worked with in developing his own idea of mystery, depriving it of all pagan content and making it the bearer of the message of the gospel. It constitutes one of the most remarkable examples in the New Testament of Christ's capturing an instrument of pagan thought and worship and making it His own.

What now, specifically, did Paul have in mind when he spoke of the mystery of Christ (to use only one of the enlargements of the term)? What is it that was kept secret for long ages; which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations; which was hidden for ages in God? What is it that, having been so hidden, has now been disclosed, revealed, made known? The several definitions or circumscriptions given in the passage cited would hardly seem to bear the character of a wholly new revelation. Israel is to be saved after salvation shall have come to the gentiles; the mystery is a plain coming forth out of God's will for the gathering of all things in Christ; the mystery is Christ, or Christ in you, and it is compared to the union of husband and wife which points to the close relationship obtaining between Christ and the church. Closely associated with all these ideas is the gathering in of the gentiles, the universality of the gospel, the exclusion of non-believers from the mystery, and the eschatological motif.

Now it would seem that the various concepts in terms of which the mystery is defined, though wonderful, are not exactly wholly new as compared with Old Testament prediction. The coming of the Messiah, the diffusion of the word of God to the gentiles, the idea of fellowship between Jew and gentile, the consummation at the end of the age — all of these have in the New Testament emerged from prediction into reality or into greater clarity, but one would hardly say that they are essentially things that have been kept secret for long ages but are now disclosed.

THE mystery of which Paul speaks is not any *one* of the elements mentioned in these various passages, nor does it consist in their *sum*. What is new — what is absolutely new — is the *unity of their relationships to each other* as expressed in that characteristic community of the New Testament, namely *the church*. The "mystery" of the Pauline epistles is the Spirit-indwelt community of believers consisting of Jews and gentiles who constitute the body of which Christ is the head, existing in the end-time or the time-between-the-times created by the coming of Christ, and which is destined for universal manifestation in the world and for life everlasting in a new heaven and a new earth. This is the mystery, a reality not entertained in the boldest penetration of kings or prophets, a here and now reality and therefore revealed; yet revealed as wisdom of God and power of God in the foolishness and frailty of a human fellowship and therefore a mystery, seen but not understood, experienced but not comprehended, and hidden altogether as a work of grace from those not initiated into this projection of eternity into time and of time into eternity. It can be described as a fellowship of men, as the union of Jew and gentile, on its human side; as Christ or as Christ-in-you, on its divine side; as a marriage between Christ and the body of believers, as a consummation in which Christ is head over all things to the church, and all of these as God's plan for the fullness of time. Each reference sets forth a facet of the imposing undreamt-of whole. This is the "secret wisdom" which God decreed before the ages to our profit

(I Cor. 2:7), which neither the rulers of this age nor of any age have understood.

It was Paul the *missionary* who saw this vision, this mystery. This is significant. Illumined though Paul was by revelation, it was he, not Peter or John, who mediated this grand thought to the church. From the beginning real knowledge of what the church is has come from the mission field. There the elemental combat between Christ and Satan takes place. There as nowhere else one finds the essence of things. Nowhere is the church more the *church* than on the mission field. It is perhaps not so obviously mysterious that established churches allied with the state, or big business, or large philanthropies, or a comfortably situated middle-class, continue in existence. The mystery is there no less, of course. Indeed, it may be greater. But it certainly is not so obvious as in a situation in which Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, paganism, primitive legalism, and sometimes missionary ineptness threaten the life of the church. The fellowship, the unity, the stewardship of the gospel — these are the central concerns of the church in a situation where no group can be an island to itself.

WOULD we know what the church is? Then do not look at staid Jerusalem, but at Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. Look at the church-at-the frontier. Look at the church with a growing edge, whether that growing edge be at Lupwe, Tokyo, Chicago or Jonesville. That is the only kind of church the New Testament knows. Jerusalem did not do much for God's kingdom missionarily and she soon disappeared from the active scene. But she did have one virtue which subsequent Jerusalems may well seek to emulate — she was willing to listen to the mission field (Acts 11 and 15). A large part of the contemporary church is indeed allowing itself to be taught by the mission field on the score of the unity of the church. This is no small part of the meaning of the ecumenical movement. At this aspect of the church's life in relation to the revelation of the mystery of Christ we want to look in a subsequent article.

Education, Evangelism and the Covenant

by Hugh Koops

WHEN the average member of the Christian Reformed Church is asked: "What is a covenant?" his immediate reply is: "A covenant is an agreement, a contract, made by God with His people." The theologian will remind us that this agreement is monopleuric, that is, one-sided, but there will be general agreement that there are two parties involved in a relationship, and that in this instance these two parties are God and man. The doctrine of the covenant is clearly defind in terms of these two, and only these two, parties. A definition of the covenant well known in the Christian Reformed Church is the following:

> The covenant of grace may be defined as that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience.[1]

When, however, the average member of the Christian Reformed Church is asked a different question, namely: "And what does the doctrine of the covenant of grace mean to you?" his usual reply is: "The doctrine of the covenant means that both my children and I are to be baptized. The doctrine of the covenant demands of me that my children be brought up as Christians, preferably with the assistance of a Christian school system."

Note well what has happened here. The emphasis of the doctrine of the covenant has completely changed. The covenant of grace is *defined* as a relationship between God and man, but it is *applied* as a relationship between the parent and his child. The vertical relationship in the definition has been replaced by the horizontal relationship in the application. The doctrine we *define* turns out not to be the doctrine we *apply*.

WHICH of these two relationships is really involved in the doctrine of the covenant? In constituting the covenant God says: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to

1. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 277.

thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7). Note that this agreement, this covenant, is between God and man, not between parent and child. It is the divine-human, the vertical, relationship which is the covenantal relationship.

Of course, God does not neglect man's children. God very graciously takes into consideration the fact that man is not only an individual. He knows this well, for He made man and He knows how badly man needed woman. God therefore welcomes man as a family into the covenantal relationship. But the fact that a wife is present, or that children are present, does not constitute the covenant. Rather, it is the fact that God has entered into a relationship with man. That children are included only tells us that God looks upon children as belonging to man. God recognizes children when He establishes His covenant, but children are not essential to the covenant; they are essential to man who is invited into this gracious relationship with God. Children are present because man is present.

This means that when we speak of the covenantal responsibilities of parents, we speak of their responsibilities toward God rather than toward their children. Their responsibilities toward their children are present already before this new relationship with God is established. The obligations parents have to their children are not covenantal obligations; they are parental obligations. And when we speak of the covenantal privileges of children, we should speak of the privileges granted children by God through their parents within the relationship of redemption, rather than the privileges these children share in common with the children of those who are not within the covenant of grace.

THE relationship between the covenant and parenthood is simply that of the redemptive order to the created order. God does not establish a new relationship between parent and child when He welcomes both into the covenant. Rather, He assumes a relationship which already is in existence, a relationship present before the covenantal relationship is established because it is part of the created order. It holds for the unbeliever as well as for the believer. The unbelieving parent has responsibilities toward his child as much as does the believing parent, though he may lack the motivation of the Spirit to meet his responsibilities. In the doctrine of the gracious covenant, God welcomes into the redemptive world a created relationship.

Moreover, this acceptance of men, with their responsibilities, into the redemptive order affects all their relationships within the created order. In the context of the establishment of the covenant it is apparent that other than parental relationships are brought into the covenantal relationship, for example, that of the master to his slave (in modern terms, that of the employer to his employee), whether the slave be born in the household or purchased from an outsider (cf. Gen. 17:27). We all believe that wives and daughters are also included, though they could not receive the Old Testament symbol of covenantal membership. The doctrine of the covenant states that all relationships are amenable to grace. When a person is caught up into the covenantal relationship all his relationships within the created order are welcome. Parent-child, teacher-student, employer-employee, husband-wife — all created relationships are susceptible to the grace of God revealed in the covenant.

The doctrine of the gracious covenant does not, however, *define* these relationships of the created order. It merely assumes them, without altering their structure. From what we know of God's dealing with Abraham we see that Abraham already had, before God came to him to establish the covenant, a number of responsibilities. Abraham is absolved of none of these. His responsibilities toward his wife, his children, and his servants all remain. God does not remove any man from his responsibilities; God accepts man with his responsibilities and blesses these responsibilities with His favor. He is a God to Abraham and his seed, to man and his relationships to other men.

We must therefore recognize that the covenant in no way ever circumscribes our responsibilities. It is incorrect to say that the covenant demands a special consideration for our children. Nature does, but only because they are near to us. And God blesses this consideration for those near us by telling us that we must love our neighbors. We need not be told who our neighbors are. Ever since Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan we have known that we dare not draw a limit around our responsibilities.[2]

IT IS important to distinguish between the doctrine of the covenant and the doctrine of parenthood. This distinction is much more than a matter of terms. If this were all it involved we would only have to go through our textbooks and printed sermons and correct our terminology. Wherever necessary, we could cross out *covenantal* and write over it *parental.* But much more is demanded. The distinction requires that we see which comes first:

2. Let us be thankful the Christian Reformed Church does not deny baptism to adopted children. It is unfortunate, however, that their baptism is only permitted, and not required.

created relationships or the covenant of grace, creation or re-creation, education or theology.

These two doctrines reside in two different spheres, and we must recognize this fact. The doctrine of the covenant describes God's relationship with man. The doctrine of parenthood describes man's relationship with his children. The doctrine of the covenant belongs in the redemptive or re-creative order. It is theological, more specifically, soteriological. The doctrine of parenthood appears before the order of salvation. It belongs in the created order. It is anthropological, and a part of the doctrine of human responsibility. It should be considered when the doctrine of the image of God in man is considered.

It is highly important that we place, in our soteriological structure, the redemptive order after the created. We must place the doctrine of the covenant after the doctrine of parenthood. If we insist that parental responsibility follows from, rather than precedes and is assumed by, the doctrine of the covenant, we jeopardize our understanding of God's saving process. If we see man's responsibilities as coming only after salvation and as defined by the way of salvation, we shall soon be left with no doctrine of salvation. But if there is a relationship among men before the covenant, before salvation, then, and then only, can man be saved — with his responsibilities, in his relatedness.

The Jews made a very dangerous mistake. They placed the doctrine of parental responsibility after the doctrine of the covenant. They said that parents were responsible for their children because of the covenant. In this way only Jews could be saved, only Jews and their generic seed. Such an interpretation of the covenant, identifying parental responsibility with covenantal responsibility, while seeming to be a movement away from individualism, is in reality a movement toward individualism. For it sets a creaturely limit to redemptive grace. Created responsibilities are found only after salvation, but eventual salvation itself cannot be found.

Paul tried as best he could to correct this tendency toward individualism. He wrote: "He [God] saith not, And to seeds, as of many [that is, as individuals]; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). Because men are related and responsible, because men are more than individuals, because mankind is a unity, God — by becoming man — can be related to all men and can be held responsible for the sin of all. It is in this way that God saves, making use of a created reality, the unity of mankind. He looks upon us as including our seed, Christ. We are washed in His blood; we are clothed in His spotless robe. But we can be washed in His blood and we can be clothed in His robe only because mankind is a unity, and God could enter that unity in Jesus Christ. As soon as we place the responsibilities of this unity after the covenant we destroy our capacity to accept salvation.[3]

HAVING described the value of the doctrine of the covenant, I should like to suggest some of the implications of this doctrine for evangelism and education.

The doctrine of the covenant should not be a cause of embarrassment for *evangelism.* If it has been, it is only because we thought of the doctrine of parental responsibility whenever we mentioned the doctrine of the covenant. But parental responsibility comes before evangelism, not with evangelism. This doctrine of the covenant is not a limiting doctrine; it does not recommend that first of all one must be concerned about the salvation of those within the family of the believer. Concern for the fiamily is first of all a natural interest, not peculiarly a spiritual interest. God assumes this interest in the family, and gives to it a spiritual dimension when He enters into the covenant with man. In evangelism we must presuppose the responsibilities of the parent, and put foremost the glorious truth of the covenant — that God enters into fellowship with man, the whole man, in all his relationships.

But this redemptive grace is not limited to the family. The redemptive sphere is not limited by genetics. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. The missionary, therefore, need not fear the covenant. Rather, he should rejoice in this doctrine, for it reveals God who comes down to speak to man, to fellowship with man, to love man. And this God treats man not as an infant, but as a responsible being. A man's children are wrapped up in this glorious and gracious covenant. His wife and workers are also loved by God. The covenant has been established that in the believer and his seed all the nations of the earth may be blessed.

Membership in the covenant brings certain peculiarly covenantal obligations. Each Christian is obligated to live his life in every relationship fully conscious of his new relationship to God. The Christian now finds a new dimension in his relationships, new vistas to his responsibilities. He has been caught up into fellowship with God. He is obliged to tell of this new relationship to others. And he does this in every relationship in the created order in which he finds himself. Thus the schoolteacher,

3. This is not to say that man cannot be saved when he has an individualistic theology. He is not saved by his theology.

while her task in the created order is to teach school, may very well find, and ought to find, a redemptive task in addressing those whom she may know to be outside this covenantal fellowship with God. This is also true for the employer, the parent, the husband, the employee, the child, and the wife.

Thus the covenant does not evade, but calls for, evangelism. It provides a foundation upon which to proceed with our evangelical task. Indeed, the covenant is precisely the message we must bring, not the message we must avoid. We must proclaim the gracious love of a God who covenants with man. The covenantal sermon is the evangelical sermon, and not the "Christian school" sermon.

Not only does the covenant provide our message in evangelism, but it has something to say regarding our method in evangelism. The covenant illustrates this truth: God's redeeming grace captures created institutions. The covenant does not destroy these institutions, nor take the believer out of them. The covenant would change their direction, would guide them into the love of God. The missionary proclaims grace to a culture. He does not destroy that culture. He proclaims life, not death, for cultural expression.[4]

IN moving from evangelism to education I shall not attempt much more than to point to the foundation upon which our educators must build. It seems to me rather evident that this foundation is not the doctrine of the covenant. Let us build our program of evangelism, rather than our program of education, upon the doctrine of the covenant. For the doctrine of the covenant belongs to theology, and not to education. This doctrine is a foundation for a church, not for a school.

A theory of education must be built upon the doctrine of man rather than upon the doctrine of salvation. For the Christian this doctrine of man will be the doctrine of the saved man, the Christian man. But salvation leaves man a man. A Christian theory of education finds its roots in Christian anthropology rather than Christian soteriology. And in anthropology we find the doctrine we have often confused with the doctrine of the covenant. Here we find the doctrine of responsibility, particularly parental responsibility.

Now parental responsibility as such, it seems to me, does not require a separate school system. Parental responsibility only insists that parents are responsible for the education of their children, but it does not declare how they are to meet this responsibility. Perhaps they will do this through a class in their home; perhaps they will hire a tutor. They may co-operate with other parents and construct a school building and hire a schoolteacher. Perhaps they will send their children to a school operated by other individuals, or by the state. Parental responsibility states only that the parents are responsible for the education of their children.

If these parents are Christian, members of the covenant, they will see immediately that it is not only their responsibility to provide an education for their children. It is also their responsibility to provide a Christian education for their children. But the necessity of recognizing the divine-human relationship within the educating process does not as such and by itself determine the structure of the educational system. The various possibilities mentioned in the preceding paragraph may permit, and even foster, the spiritual dimension in education. The doctrine of parental responsibility in the context of grace demands simply, but firmly, that a Christian education must be provided for these children.

It is the task of the Christian educator to explore the various possible ways in which these requirements of parental responsibility, redeemed by grace, can be met. In doing this, Christian educators will require that certain educational standards must be maintained. They will probably conclude that, in the present situation, considering the obstacles within the present public educational system and the obstacles within a private system in the home, a separate school system is the best solution. But this conclusion is not dictated by the covenant of grace. Rather, the covenant prefers the redemption of existing institutions.

Thus the decision for a separate school system is reached only after three important factors are considered: (1) the doctrine of parental responsibility, which recommends, where there are no existing institutions, a *parental* system; (2) educational principles, which require an *educational* system; and (3) the doctrine of the covenant, which demands a *Christian* system. The doctrine of the covenant does not determine the *structure* of the system nor does it determine the *curriculum* of the system. It does, however, require that the parent-teacher-child relationship be articulate in its acknowledgment of the grace of God.

I am of the opinion that our program of Christian education can proceed properly only if it is established upon an analysis of man's nature and his created abilities. I also believe that our program

4. Dr. Harry Boer has been very consistent in maintaining and defending this truth. Institutions are not established, but redeemed, by the grace of God. I have attempted to describe the attitudes of a culture and show how these attitudes can be reached by the grace of God in an article entitled "The Challenge of the Post-Christian Age," which appeared in the April, 1958, *Reformed Journal*.

of Christian evangelism can proceed properly only if we emphasize the grace of our covenant God, who loves the whole man. Christian education should not be erected upon a foundation meant for the church. And Christian evangelism should not be embarrassed by an anthropological limitation — the love of the parent directed peculiarly to his child — but it should rather use that created but limited relationship to reveal the redemptive grace of God, unlimited by created boundaries. Both Christian education and Christian evangelism can properly advance only when on their proper foundations. After all, one cannot move forward very rapidly when he keeps his legs crossed.

BOOK REVIEW

PAUL AND JESUS. Origin and General Character of Paul's Preaching of Christ. By Herman Ridderbos, translated by David H. Freeman. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958. Pp. 155. $3.75.

Reviewed by SIMON J. DEVRIES, Minister, Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.

Paul and Jesus is worthy of careful reading for several reasons: firstly, it is highly informative in its presentation of the Biblical data which indicate the relation between Jesus and Paul, from which much of New Testament religion developed; secondly, Ridderbos does not waste energy and effort in beating down straw-men of the past, but deals with one of the most significant and influential figures of present-day scholarship, Rudolf Bultmann; thirdly, this book is significant for its example to conservative scholars in dealing with liberal views. Ridderbos indicates that conservatives have little to fear from honest Biblical criticism, so long as it is honest and so long as it is genuine. He apparently believes that the best way to refute error is to deal frankly and fairly with opposing opinions, however radical they may appear to be, confronting them with none other than the argument of the Biblical data.

Various schools of interpretation have foundered on this rock. The old Liberal interpretation, the *Religionsgeschichtliche* view of Bousset and Reitzenstein, the "Eschatological" interpretation of Schweitzer, and now the Gnostic interpretation of Bultmann, fail to do justice to Paul's view of Jesus. Ridderbos is convinced that nothing can account for Paul's high Christology except an actual historical Christ who was all that Paul said he was.

In discussing possible Gnostic influences on Paul, Ridderbos seems somewhat apodictic at times. Perhaps he will be helped, as many New Testament scholars have been, by a study of the Qumran literature (cf. K. Stendahl, *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, 1957), and also by the newly discovered Gnostic library from Egypt, which is only now beginning to attract scholarly attention.

LETTER

SIRS:

Permit me to comment on a letter published by you in the July-August issue of the *Journal.*

The letter I have in mind was written by a certain Mr. J. H. Sietsema. In his letter he points up a few obstacles which those seeking to express their thoughts publicly are confronted with. I find his letter to be a bit unfounded and inconsistent. And my chief concern is not the obstacles which he lists, but what his letter implies.

Mr. Sietsema's letter, as I take it, was touched off by those articles written in the *Banner,* a Christian Ref. weekly, challenging the *Stromata* article written by Mr. Hoogland, a Calvin Seminarian, who thought to explore an area of theological consideration, namely, the infallibility of the Scriptures.

According to Mr. Sietsema, one who thinks a new thought in religion, etc., is labeled a Modernist, etc. To be labeled, therefore, is an obstacle to the freedom of expression. In other words, Mr. Sietsema is suggesting the right for anyone to give expression to his thoughts without having to be labeled

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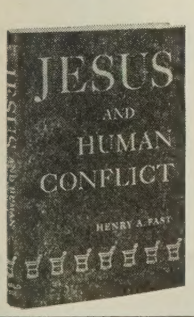

There is much controversy over just what Jesus meant in the Sermon on the Mount: resist not evil, turn the other cheek, go the second mile, etc.

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a Modernist, a Communist, or a Radical. So far I agree with him. However, in the last paragraph of his letter he would deny the right of some persons to express their views, for he writes: "An incident which could have been dealt with in the home (the seminary) became the concern of the whole town."

To Mr. Sietsema a person may have the right to express his thoughts on a subject of public concern, but then only a select few may be allowed to weigh, evaluate, and pass judgment. If this student had the right to express his own particular thoughts on a particular subject then, surely, others may be given this same right even if they would find it necessary to disagree. It must be done in love, of course, as one person put it recently: Speaking the Truth in Love.

A few further remarks regarding those labels Mr. Sietsema mentioned, particularly the word Modernist. It would be presumptuous for anyone to take the attitude that the articles written in response to Mr. Hoogland's article conveyed the thought that he, Mr. Hoogland, is being labeled a Modernist. I do not recall any article labeling him as such.

Furthermore, Mr. Sietsema in his letter is doing exactly what he condemns in others, namely, labeling. For did he not write regarding *self-appointed "watchmen"?* Just who are these *self-appointed watchmen* he makes reference to?

It would be a sad day indeed if some day the Christian Reformed Church should make a ruling that her members keep silent on important matters. Too many of her members are sitting back complacently, possessing the "I don't care" attitude and the spirit of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

In regard to fearing denominational searchlights, nobody need be afraid, who feareth the Lord. Not even the self-appointed "watchman."

Sincerely yours,

JAMES BRINKERHOFF

Curiosity is one of the permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous mind.

— SAMUEL JOHNSON

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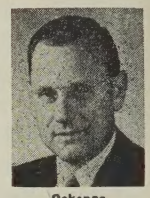
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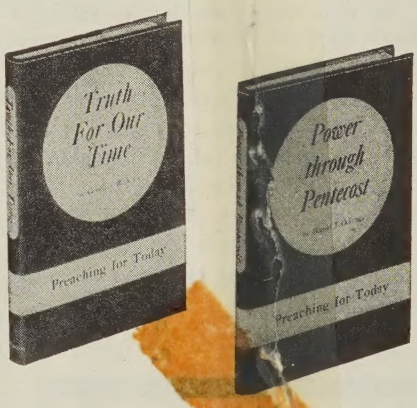

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